

SUMMARY MINUTES
DAVIS POND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #6
June 17, 2004
ST CHARLES PARISH COURTHOUSE

1. Committee members in attendance:

Garrett Broussard, LDNR
Marnie Winter, Jefferson Parish DEA
Allen Bolotte, NRCS
Kerry St. Pe', BTNEP
Dwight Bradshaw, for David Ogé, LDEQ
Jeanene Peckham, EPA
Heather Warner Finley, LDWF
Bruce Baird, USACE
David Walther, for Kevin Roy, USFWS
Lonnie Serpas, Plaquemines Parish
Earl Matherne, for Albert Laque, St. Charles Parish
Bruce Champion, Dept. of Health & Hospitals
Frank Ellender, for Kermit Coulon, Landowners
Pete Vujnovich, Jr., Plaquemines Parish Oyster Assn.

Not Represented Were:

Lafourche Parish Council
National Marine Fisheries Service
Shrimp Fisheries Upper Basin
Shrimp Fisheries Lower Basin
Recreational Fisheries

2. Garrett Broussard welcomed everyone, and after the roll call and self introduction by the attendees, the committee passed a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting that was held on February 11, 2003.

3. Rodney Mack, COE, gave a report on the operation of the Structure for the last 18 months. The committee accepted the report which will be sent to Tom Bernard who will then forward it to all of the committee members. There was an extensive discussion following the report noting that the structure is now closed, and has at other times been closed, due to excessive amount of precipitation which tends to freshen the basin abnormally. There was a question as to why do we have a minimum flow of 1000cfs in the water control plan and yet, have the structure closed during certain periods. The committee then passed a motion to task the technical committee to study the operation plan to possibly amend the plan to make exceptions to the minimum flow in times of abnormally low salinities in the basin.

4. Jack Fredine gave a status of construction on Davis Pond. The ponding area was not draining properly and consequently threatening bottomland hardwoods. More important,

it prevented us from operating the diversion in the manner for it was designed. Therefore, actions are being taken to improve this. The St. Charles Parish DPW recently completed widening and deepening the present cuts, and extending them further into the ponding area to nearby open water areas, noting that in the near future the gabions at the lake rim will be removed and the rim lowered at these cuts to allow for better drainage of the ponding area. A contract has been awarded to Dean Equipment Co. to place a 2nd lift on the east guide levee and bring it up to grade. That contract should be completed before the end of the year. The west guide levee also has subsided substantially and vinyl sheet pile were installed in the extreme low areas in 2003. That work was done by St. Charles Parish DPW and Gill's Crane Service. The COE is in the process of finalizing the design to connect those vinyl sheets with additional sheets to complete the lower half of the west guide levee raising. That contract will also provide for raising the Cypress Canal Levee with vinyl sheet piling from its intersection with the west guide levee to Lake Cataouatche. This contract is also scheduled to be completed this year.

5. Jack Fredine gave the committee a report on the salinity averages over the past year. He explained the methodology used to obtain his figures. He also explained that although the salinities didn't exactly hit the projected target levels, it was indeed close. His target average calculation produced a 6.25 ppt at the 5 pt. line, compared to an average annual salinity of 6.5 at the 5 ppt line for 2003. This reflected a very fresh year in 2003; it was not the result of Davis Pond Diversions. An extensive discussion followed. Kerry St. Pe' commented that; although the salinity levels were not right on target, they were within the acceptable range and suggested that there so many variables involved that affect salinities, that we should not vary from the existing operational plan. After more discussions, Pete Vujnovich and Bruce Baird introduced a motion, which passed, to have the technical committee study what and if there would be an acceptable means to bring the average of the target salinity level ranges closer to 5ppt at the 5 pt line.

6. Chuck Villarrubia gave a report on the December flow test and went through the data that was accumulated from the test including the results from the flotant marsh movement stations that were installed just prior to the test. Chuck also reported on salinities in the basin for the past year. A lot was learned about the ability of the ponding to properly drain and what modifications need to be made to allow for that to happen. After furnishing everyone with a copy of his annual report, Chuck gave a brief summary of that report. He pointed out that; although, his report is considered complete, it certainly will be more meaningful when the Davis Pond Project is 100% complete and fully operational. Chuck made a power-point presentation on his report and explained in detail all aspects of that report. Many questions followed and an extensive discussion on the details of the report was exchanged between Kerry St. Pe', Bruce Baird, and Pete Vujnovich. It was also recommended and, a motion passed, to accept the Operational Plan, that was distributed at the meeting and included in the approved Water Control Plan, for the coming year until advised to be amended by the Technical Committee. That committee will meet later in the fall of this year, 2004.

7. Tom Bernard pointed out that during the test operation of the diversion structure in Dec 03-Jan 04, DNR and the COE worked very closely with USGS to calibrate the flow gage that had previously been installed in the outflow channel but had never been used. Because of the cooperation of the three agencies, that gage is now calibrated and is now being used by all as accurate data, and is posted on the USGS web-site. Therefore, a motion was brought before the committee by Tom Bernard to “Request that the LDNR and the USACE amend the Water Control Plan to have the USGS Gage No. 295501090190400 located on the U.S. Hwy. 90 bridge in the outflow channel be the official measure of operational flow. For routine operations, the structure operator will make initial gate settings using the gate equations currently in use and will refine gate adjustments based on flows reported by the USGS Gage. In the event of equipment failure, the gate equations will be used to determine flow. For reporting purposes, the historical record of flows measured by the USGS Gage will be considered the official flow.”

8. Garrett Broussard asked if anyone had new business that needed to be discussed. He received a negative response from the committee members; however, there were some questions and comments from the public:

- a. David Soileau, LDWF, inquired about the public access over the proposed vinyl sheet pile wall along the Cypress Canal Levee. Tom Bernard and Jack Fredine explained that public access over the levee would no longer be needed since a much improved water access from Lake Cataouatche through the Cypress Lumber Canal Levee borrow ditch was now available with more improvements planned during the construction of the modifications to the gabion shoreline protection that is scheduled later on this year. It was also mentioned that earthen ramp access over the new vinyl sheet piling was also being built at half-mile intervals mainly for animals, but also humans, to have access.
- b. LDWF Enforcement Captain Sandy Dares, who spoke on his own behalf, inquired about excess amounts of flowage during the waterfowl season, and requested that consideration should be given to hunters in the future. Chuck Villarrubia will confer with Tom Bernard and attempt to come up with a plan to give more advance notice for adjustments that are to be made in the flowage of the structure. Mr. Dares was also given access to the USGS site that gives a real time data on the structure operation including the discharge, which was not available during the last hunting season. He was also given access to the telephone no. that provides instantaneous gage readings, both in the river and in the outfall channel.
- c. A member of the public, unidentified, asked if the structure would be used to drain the Davis Pond Outfall area in the event of storm surges produced by a hurricane or tropical storm. Tom Bernard explained that the emergency plan calls for the structure to be closed when a tropical storm enters the gulf and would remain in the closed position until there is no longer a threat from that storm. Although it may be possible to actually have a reverse flow through the structure, it was not designed with that in mind and being used a drainage structure is not now an option.

- d. Someone from the general audience asked the question as to where the spoil from the small channel enlargements in the ponding area being placed. Jack Fredine explained that; although most of the material was placed into the channels and allowed to flow into Lake Cataouatche, during no flows material was placed along the cuts and spread thin and not allowed to mound up along the banks.
- e. Someone else from the general audience asked if the East Guide Levee work would involve a borrow ditch on the Ponding Area side of the levee. Jack Fredine responded that the East Guide Levee borrow material would come out of Bayou Verret and the US 90 borrow canal, and no new borrow ditches would be excavated.

9. Garrett Broussard then stated that; since there was no further business, old or new, that needed to be discussed; the meeting should be adjourned. He thanked everyone for attending and asked for a motion to close the meeting. A motion was introduced by Kerry St. Pe' and seconded by Bruce Baird to adjourn the 2004 meeting of the DPAC; that motion passed unanimously.

Tom Bernard, P.E.
LDNR Coordinator,
Davis Pond Advisory Committee
Davis Pond Freshwater Div. Structure